

Mark Bailey

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Municipal and Regional Shelters

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Testimony through Senate Bill 228 in support of the:

**Indefinite renewal of the Connecticut Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in
Municipal and Regional Shelters;**

Mandatory spay/neuter for dogs and cats adopted from municipal and regional shelters;

**Finding alternate locations for adoptable healthy and treatable animals when shelter space is to
capacity**

Dear Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Albis, and Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Mark Bailey. I am a commissioner on the Connecticut State Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals in Municipal and Regional Shelters. I am honored to come before you today to discuss the legislative proposals that have resulted from the work of our state animal welfare task force.

From its inception, the task force, through our commissioner membership, invited guests, and those who regularly attend our meetings, has brought together animal welfare leaders from across the state to pool necessary resources of knowledge, experience, and skill in support of animals in need. In so doing we have continually engaged in honest, constructive, positive, and goal-oriented exchanges to identify common problems and collaborate toward necessary solutions that help to resolve the overwhelming state of companion animal homelessness throughout Connecticut.

In addition to the indefinite continuation of the task force, so that crucial topics and problems related to humane welfare in our state may be addressed in an ongoing manner, our work has culminated in two legislative recommendations that we hope will become part of Senate Bill 228.

First we unanimously recommend that all intact dogs and cats adopted from municipal and regional shelters be spayed or neutered before being given over to the new adopter, making better use of the state voucher system. In the words of the 2014 Department of Agriculture report on animal population control, "Pet overpopulation is a significant burden on the limited resources of municipalities. Reducing the overpopulation of dogs and cats...has a positive effect on local public health and safety...Additionally,

the reduction in animal overpopulation allows municipalities to shift their resources to focus efforts more on enforcement of animal control laws and on educational outreach regarding responsible pet ownership.”

Since the law was amended in 2012 to allow animal control officers to transport unsterilized pets to veterinarians for the new owners, so as to help ensure that the spay/neuter procedure takes place upon adoption, New Haven’s animal shelter, for example, has been following this system with unqualified success. As long as the dog or cat is not too young or sick, the newly adopted animal is transported by shelter staff or, in some cases, volunteers, to the veterinary clinic, where the adopter may pick up their new pet after the spay/neuter surgery is complete. Considering the number of vouchers that are unredeemed in Connecticut each year, expanding this to a statewide required practice could significantly reduce the number of homeless companion animals that overcrowd and tax the financial and human resources of our public shelters. In other words, this law would be a classic win-win for our shelters and the new adopters, as it would also make more thorough use of our state voucher system.

The second legislative proposal our task force unanimously recommends concerns those unfortunate healthy and treatable companion animals who wind up homeless in municipal and regional shelters. We seek to update current law, based on the state law of Delaware, to say that when animal shelter conditions are severely overcrowded, the animal control officer will seek to place the adoptable animal in a nearby shelter, trusted rescue organization, or foster home, before considering euthanasia. For instance, the Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter in Branford, Connecticut, when it is able, will take animals from shelters such as New Haven to increase the animal’s chances of adoption. The Connecticut Humane Society has also done so, among others, as have numerous reputable animal rescue organizations.

To codify this into state law would represent the expectations of major national animal welfare sources, such as Maddie’s Fund, that are willing to provide significant amounts of money when they recognize ongoing instances of humane collaboration among regional animal welfare organizations, as well as the building of statewide coalitions to help place more healthy and treatable animals into loving homes. In other words, when there are empty kennels and foster homes available just miles from the overcrowded shelter where a homeless animal resides, that animal should be given the full chance for adoption through the humane spirit of cooperation. This law, once again, would elevate Connecticut’s humane standards so as to attract funding from animal welfare and advocacy organizations that require cross-regional collaboration and coalition building. And then, with the funding to support this effort, more precious lives can be saved as the cost and emotional pain of euthanasia are further reduced.

I hope you will allow these important humane welfare initiatives to move forward, bringing Connecticut that much closer to the hopes and wishes of so many, that abandoned and homeless loving companion animals in our public care are given every reasonable chance toward finding equally loving forever homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mark Bailey

Actual proposed language may be found in the supplemental portion of task force

Chairman Michael Freda’s public testimony.